

president, government affairs, U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the Visa Waiver Program

October 17, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you. Welcome to the White House. I'm pleased to stand with the representatives of seven countries—the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and South Korea—that have met the requirements to be admitted to the United States Visa Waiver Program. Soon the citizens of these nations will be able to travel to the United States for business or tourism without a visa. I congratulate these close friends and allies on this achievement, and I thank you for joining us here.

I also thank Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of the Homeland—Department of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff for working hard to make sure this day has finally arrived. Appreciate other members of the administration here and members of the diplomatic corps.

All of the nations represented here today allow American citizens to travel to their countries visa free. The United States has not accorded their citizens the same privilege. For years the leaders of these nations have explained to me how frustrating it is for their citizens to wait in lines, pay visa fees to take a vacation or make a business trip or visit their families here in the United States. These close friends of America told me that it was unfair that their people had to jump through bureaucratic hoops that other allies can walk around. I told them I agree with them. I also told them that in the world after September the 11th, we could only expand travel opportunities if we increased security measures at the same time.

So nearly 2 years ago, my administration asked Congress to modernize our Visa Waiver Program in a way that accomplished both of these goals. I appreciate the bipartisan support this initiative has received on Capitol Hill. My administration worked with Congress to pass a law allowing us to admit new

countries to the Visa Waiver Program. These countries agree to share information about threats to our people. They also agree that their citizens use a new system that requires travelers to register online ahead of their visits to the United States. These citizens will travel to the United States only if they have tamper-proof biometric passports. I'm grateful to the dedicated officers from the United States and our allies who worked hard to complete the agreements to meet these new requirements.

Because of this good work, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff has notified our Congress the administration intends to use its new authority to admit seven countries into the Visa Waiver Program. In about a month, we will be proud to extend to citizens of these seven countries the privilege of visa-free travel.

Today's announcement signifies a new chapter in the relationship between the United States and your nations. It is a testament to the strong bonds of friendship that unite our people.

This is a significant achievement, but it is only the start. A number of America's other close friends are participating in a process called the visa waiver roadmap that is helping them qualify for the Visa Waiver Program. I welcome the Ambassadors from these roadmap countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland, and Romania. We thank you for coming today. We thank you for your friendship, and we look forward to the day when your countries join the Visa Waiver Program.

I believe the best foreign policy for America is one that lets people from other countries get to know this country firsthand. Throughout our history, some of the strongest advocates of freedom have been those who came to America and saw the blessings of liberty with their own eyes. Extending this opportunity to some of our closest allies deepens our friendship and makes all our countries safer. I'm grateful to all the countries here for seeking to strengthen the ties between our citizens. I look forward to even stronger partnerships in the years ahead.

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Bulgaria's Ambassador to the U.S. Elena Borislavova Poptodorova; Cyprus' Ambassador to the U.S. Andreas Kakouris; Greece's Ambassador to the U.S. Alexandros P. Mallias; Malta's Ambassador-designate to the U.S. Mark Miceli-Farrugia; Poland's Ambassador to the U.S. Robert Kupiecki; and Romania's Ambassador to the U.S. Adrian Cosmin Vierita.

Memorandum on Designation of Officers of the Social Security Administration to Act as the Commissioner of Social Security

October 17, 2008

Memorandum for the Commissioner of Social Security

Subject: Designation of Officers of the Social Security Administration to Act as the Commissioner of Social Security

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 5 U.S.C. 3345 *et seq.*, it is hereby ordered that:

Section 1. Order of Succession. Subject to the provisions of section 2 of this memorandum, the following officials of the Social Security Administration, in the order listed, shall act as and perform the functions and duties of the office of the Commissioner of Social Security (Commissioner), during any period in which both the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner have died, resigned, or become otherwise unable to perform the functions and duties of the office of the Commissioner, until such time as the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner are able to perform the duties of that office:

- (a) Chief of Staff;
- (b) Deputy Commissioner for Operations;
- (c) Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance and Management;
- (d) Deputy Commissioner for Systems;
- (e) Deputy Commissioner for Quality Performance;
- (f) Regional Commissioner, Atlanta; and
- (g) Regional Commissioner, Dallas.

Sec. 2. Exceptions. (a) No individual who is serving in an office listed in section 1 in an acting capacity, by virtue of so serving, shall act as Commissioner pursuant to this memorandum.

(b) No individual listed in section 1 shall act as Commissioner unless that individual is otherwise eligible to so serve under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of this memorandum, the President retains the discretion, to the extent permitted by law, to depart from this memorandum in designating an acting Commissioner.

Sec. 3. This memorandum supersedes the President's Memorandum of April 17, 2006 (Designation of Officers of the Social Security Administration).

Sec. 4. This memorandum is intended to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by any party against the United States, its agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

Sec. 5. You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:15 a.m., October 20, 2008]

NOTE: This memorandum will be published in the *Federal Register* on October 21.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

October 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.